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SHAKESPEARE AND THE PURITAN'S "PENSIVE
REGARD FOR THE WELL-BESTOWAL
OF TIME"

If it is true that there is contemporary reference in Shakespeare's plays, the key that will unlock the door to admit to these illusive yet valuable meanings, is an intimate knowledge of the life of Shakespeare's day; and especially of those phases of the life which touched the vital interests of the dramatists and of their audiences. One phase of this life particularly invites attention, as offering in its study a means of determining Shakespeare's opinion of one of the important questions of his day. I refer to the hostility of those extreme puritans who contended that plays were to be banished utterly. Nothing could concern either dramatist or audience more than the deadly hostility to the stage of the puritan, who, deaf to the argument that it was the abuse and not the use that should be put down, strove to banish the theatre.

In the arguments pro and con of this dispute, we have a fruitful field for the discovery and the understanding of topical allusions in Shakespeare. It is necessary, however, in order to make progress in this field of contemporary allusion, to separate and to examine singly the arguments involved in the dispute. With the purpose of clearing and of limiting the ground, therefore, only one of the puritan arguments against the theatre, that of "wasting the golden hours of the day," together with the reply to it by the dramatists, is discussed here. By an exposition of this argument, in connection with certain allusions to it by Shakespeare, a ray of needed light is thrown upon the disputed attitude of Shakespeare to the puritan attack upon the stage.

In the violent religious disputes of the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the right and proper employment of time assumed an importance that can be understood by us to-day, only when we recall the antithetical conceptions of the play-loving follower of the renaissance and of the play-hating follower of the reformation. If the thought of the former was "carelessly to fleet the time away," the concern of the latter was, no less, carefully to avoid wasting upon the pleasures of live "time more precious than all else."

Out of the clash of these two conceptions arose the puritan charge against plays of "consuming the day, which without pastime

flies too swift away."¹ There were among the puritans of Shakespeare's day "certain grave learned divines" who, holding "that it is not lawful for any Christian man to play at any game or pastime," asked "what account we are able to yield to God of the time that we lose in play."² To them and their like, stage-plays were flagrant abusers of time: they wasted the time of the poets who wrote, of the actors who played, and of the crowds who applauded. William Prynne³ is especially severe against "such infamous persons as players," for by them "much time is lost and days of honest travel are turned into vain exercises." They are the cause of great "mispendence of money, and that which far transcends all treasure, of precious, peerless time." And by reason of plays people "flock into the theaters out of an affected desire to post and pass away our peerless time, which flies too fast without these wings and spurs to speed it." The author of *A Short Treatise against Stage-Playes*, 1625,⁴ had earlier argued the same objection against plays. He would have "the very idle persons" that "ordinarily resort to stage plays rather set to some honest labour than so unprofitably mispend the time to their own hurt." The condemnation was general. Every one connected with the giving or seeing of plays came in for a share in the waste of time. "All of you, for the most part, do lose the time or rather willfully cast the same away; condemning that as nothing which is so pretious as your lives cannot redeem."⁵

These "learned divines" in their general condemnation of games and pastimes were not allowed, however, "to bear all away" in their hostility to the theatre. The dramatists, with other friends of recreation, attacked their opinion as born of ignorance, envy, and prejudice; and in their plays they introduced "a kind of a puritan"⁶ whose "pensive care for the well-bestowal of time,"⁷ characterised

¹ Quarles, *Embl.* 1.X. (1718).

² John Northbrooke, *Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes*, Sh. Soc. pub., 1843, p. 49.

³ *Histrion-Mastix. The Players Scourge.* 1663, pp. 540, 39.

⁴ In *The English Drama and Stage under the Tudor and Stuart Princes.* Ed. Hazlitt, 1869, p. 242.

⁵ *Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theatre*, in *English Drama and Stage*, p. 130.

⁶ Maria so describes Malvolio, *Tw. N.* (II. iii, 151).

⁷ Richard Hooker, *Eccle. Polity*, Bk. V, Chap. XXVI (note), Keble Ed., vol. 1, p. 360.

him as of the intolerant sect. Taking direct issue with the enemies of plays, the friends of the theatre termed plays "harmless spenders of time."⁸ As for the amount of time spent upon them, "there was no more time spent about them than useth to be spent in sports, sleep, talk, and learned releasing of the mind from study."⁹ Richard Baker,¹⁰ answering William Prynne's charge that plays "cause prodigal expence in time," replies that it may be true of heathen plays, which lasted many times, many days together," but "it is false of ours;" and asks further, "What will Frenchmen say in defense of their recreation, who spend more time in one day at tennis than those at plays?"

In their endeavor to prevent recreations from being banished because men's time was too precious to be so spent, the friends of games and pastimes met the scripture-quoting enemies of plays with Scripture. Solomon's statement that "there is a time for all things, a time to play, a time to work," etc.,¹¹ was advanced against the various passages of the New Testament that were argued against spending time at the theatre.¹² Northbrooke refers to the defense of evil practices found in this passage:¹³ "And as for this place of Ecclesiastes, or Preacher, by you alledged to maintain your idle sports and vain pastimes, it is not well applied by you, for he speaketh of this diversity of time for two causes. . . . So may the drunkard, adulterer, usurer, thief, etc., with the whole rabble of wicked and ungodly ones, likewise, and to the same effect and purpose, alledge this place, and apply it for their practices, as you do for yours." In the course of his conversation with Age, Youth in Northbrooke's *Treatise* had quoted Solomon's words in justifica-

⁸ *The English Gentleman*, R. Brathwait, 1641, p. 106.

⁹ Gager in defence of his plays, as quoted by Rainoldes in *The Overthrow of Stage-Playes*, p. 21, 2nd edit., 1629.

¹⁰ *Theatrum Redivivum*, pp. 67, 56.

¹¹ *Eccle.* 3:1, 2.

¹² Northbrooke's reference to 1. Peter, 4.2., (*Treatise against*, etc. p. 174, is typical of biblical passages quoted to prove that time should not be wasted: "Therefore sayth Peter, [because we have wasted time in the past] let us hence-forwarde live, as much time as remaineth in the flesh, not after the lusts of men, but after the will of God: and whatsoever we doe let us doe all to the glory of God." Two other passages that are found similarly quoted in this connection are: "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because it is evil." (Ephes. 5. 15-16.); and "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." (Colos. 4.5.).

tion of the amusements in which he had been accustomed to spend a good part of his time.

Northbrooke's reference to the use of these words of Solomon's in defense of games and pastime is evidence that they were used in this manner; and we find them so used in the literature of the dispute itself. Gager, Rainolds, Heywood, and Chettle in their contributions to the dispute either use these words of Solomon's in argument for the allowance of "games and pastimes," or refer to their use in this connection. Henry Chettle in *Kind Heart's Dream*¹⁴ urges that "there is a time of mirth," when plays may be given, as "there is a time of mourning," when plays may not be given. "Mirth," he says, "in seasonable time taken is not forbidden by the austerest sapients. But indeed there is a time of mirth and a time of mourning, which time having been by the magistrates wisely observed, as well for the suppression of playes, as other pleasures, so likewise a time may come, when honest recreation shall have his former liberty." Thomas Heywood, in *An Apology for Actors*,¹⁵ claims that since God "hath limited us a time to rejoice as he hath enjoined us a time to mourn for our transgressions," that those who "go about to take away from us the use of all moderate recreations" are "more scrupulous than well advised." The frequent occurrence of Solomon's words by the friends of pastime in the literature of the dispute makes it likely that their significance was well understood when they were found in the plays of the period.¹⁶

¹³ *Treatise against Dicing*, etc. p. 42.

¹⁴ See in *Shakespeare Allusion Book*, New Shakespeare Society pub., p. 65.

¹⁵ *An Apol. for Actors*, Sh. Soc. edit., p. 25.

¹⁶ Further, Rainolds answering Gager in *An Overthrow of Stage Playes*, refers to Gager's use of this argument, p. 23: "Finally you say that there is a time for sportes, plaies, dances, a time for earnest studies: and man consisteth not of one part alone; he hath a body as well as a minde. . . . [But this need for recreation] does not prove the lawfulness of your theatrical sports and plays. J. Stowe, *The Survey of London*, p. 75: Marginal note to Chapter on "Sports and Pastimes of old times used in this citie": "Everything hath his time, a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Gataker, *On Lots*, p. 246: "For there is a time and season for all things, and for recreation among other things. There is a time saith Solomon for laughing and mirth, and a time for dancing and delight." J. Downname, *Four Treatises*, p. 200: "and seeing the holie Ghost himself telleth us, that as there is a time to mourn, so also there is a time to dance; I see no reason but that now upon the like occasion, and with the same holie affection, it may lawfully be used to

When Solomon's words, "there's a time for all things," are found in plays of this period, they frequently are quoted for the purpose of justifying, humourously, practices objectional to the pastime-denouncing puritans. As an instance, John Lyly puts them into the mouth of a minstrel:¹⁷ "Boy, no more words! there's a time for all things. Though I say it that should not, I have been a minstrel these thirty years and tickled more strings than thou hast hairs, but yet was never so misused." In *Every Woman in her Humour*¹⁸ the same thought is found in the mouth of a drunken reveller, and in *The Parson's Wedding*¹⁹ it is quoted by one of a group of lovers, of whom it is said by the ladies that they "could tell when to be civil, and when to be wild." In other places, also, reference to this passage in *Ecclesiastes* serves to suggest the use made of it in justifying practices condemned by the puritans.²⁰

Shakespeare must be counted in among Northbrooke's "whole rabble" of those who "likewise, and to the same effect and purpose, alledge this place, and apply it for their practices." Contemporary significance attaches itself to the use in *The Comedy of Errors*²¹ of the words, "there's a time for all things;" and gives life to a passage that has been particularly lifeless:

Ant. S. Well, sir, learn to jest in good time: there's a time for all things.

Dro. S. I durst have denied that before you were so choleric, etc.

Dromio's jesting denial of his master's statement, "There's a time for all things," ends, after many lines, as with our fuller knowledge of the significance of these words we know it will end, in the discomfiture of Dromio, who has argued the puritan point of view that there is no time at all to be allowed certain practices.

expresse our rejoicing, cheere the mind, and exercise the boöie, as well as musicke, or any other such like pastime and recreation." Hooker, *Eccle. Pol.* Book V., Chap. xxiii, 4, with broader application quotes Solomon's words. Prynne, p. 721: Cyprian says some "converted the very censure of the heavenly Scriptures into a justification of crimes and stage-plays; producing some texts of Scriptures in defence of Playes, as well as reasons."

¹⁷ Lyly, Bond edit., 111., p. 217.

¹⁸ Tudor Facsimile Edit. (E).

¹⁹ Dodsley, (1744), vol. ix, p. 425.

²⁰ *Stukeley*, Tudor Facsimile, (G3).

²¹ II, ii, 63.

In reply to the reformers' insistence upon how time should be employed, the apologists of the theatre and of other pastimes did not rest their case with bringing to the support of their side Solomon's words bearing upon the right disposition of time. They went further, and pictured the deplorable condition that would result were the theatres to be closed, in as much as those who had been accustomed to spend their time in attending plays would then give themselves up to practices far worse. Time, in short, would then be not better but worse employed. With plays banished, the apologists insisted, "the idel-headed common" would spend their time in ways less profitable. It were better, therefore, that theatres remain open, since, when freed from abuse, they were capable of moral instruction. It is this defense—time would be worse employed—to which Prynne scornfully refers when he records "the players' pretense that seeing plays serves to pass away time, which would else, perchance, be worse employed";²² and to which Gager turns, when, in answering Rainolds' attack upon university plays, he replies that "it may be, that some of his critics were worse occupied than his actors on that night that his plays were given."²³

In this part of their rebuttal of the precisians' argument of waste of time, the apologists for the stage pointed out two ways in which time would be worse employed were there no theatres. Either the pleasure-seekers would give themselves over to excessive forms of dissipation; or they would spend their idle time plotting against the government. Usually one, and not infrequently both of these dangers, were dwelt upon by the defenders of the stage in their answers to the general charge of waste of time. The first of these two replies to the puritans' charge of waste of time lays stress upon the misfortune that would result to the pleasure-seekers themselves with the closing of the theatres. Henry Chettle²⁴ opposed the suppression of the theatre, among other reasons, because of the encouragement such action would give to "dicing, drinking and the following of harlots." Richard Perkins in prefa-

²² *Histrio-Mastix*, p. 951.

²³ Quoted in Rainold's *Overthrow of Stage Plays*, p. 48.

²⁴ *Kind Heart's Dream*, p. 63.

tory verses to Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* advances the same argument:²⁵

Thou that dost rail at me for seeing a play,
 How wouldst thou have me spend my idle hours?
 Wouldst have me in a tavern drink all day,
 Melt in the sun's heat, or walk out in showers?
 Gape at the lottery from morn till even,
 To hear whose mottoes blanks have, and who prizes?

 To drab, to game, to drink, all these I hate:
 Many enormous things depend on these,
 My faculties truly to recreate
 With modest mirth, and myself best to please,
 Give me a play that no distaste can breed.

Thomas Nash,²⁶ writing in 1592, argues strongly for plays on the ground that they prevent men giving themselves to worse practices: "The policy of plays is very necessary, howsoever some shallow-brained censurers (not the deepest searchers into the secrets of government) mightily oppugne them. For whereas the afternoon being the idlest time of the day; wherein men that are their own masters (as Gentlemen of the Court, the Innes of the Court, and the number of Captains and Souldiers about London) do wholly bestow themselves upon pleasures, and that pleasure they divide (how virtuously it skills not) either into gaming, following of harlots, drinking, or seeing a Playe: is it not then better (since of four extremes all the world cannot keep them but they will choose one) that they should betake them to the least, which is Playes?"

Shakespeare in one place definitely employs this argument. It is at the end of the Chorus in *Winter's Tale*,²⁷ where "Time" asks

²⁵ The same argument is found in other of the prefatory poems prefixed to this work; p. 6, by A. Hopton:

And did it nothing, but in pleasing sort
 Keep gallants from misspending of their time
 It might suffice;

And p. 11; by Robert Pallant:

Have I not known a man, that to be hyr'd
 Would not for any treasure see a play,
 Reelee from a taverne? Shall this be admir'd,
 When as another, but the t'other day,
 That held to weare a surplisse most unmeet,
 Yet after stood at Paul's-crosse in a sheet.

²⁶ Thomas Nash, McKerrow edit. 1. pp. 211-212.

²⁷ IV. i, 29.

allowance for his tale of those who may have "spent time worse ere now":

Of this allow,
If ever you have spent time worse ere now;
If never, yet that Time himself doth say
He wishes earnestly you never may.

Such direct use of an argument of the dispute by Shakespeare, as we have here, is rare.

Besides the value of plays in keeping the people from indulging in dissipation of various kinds, the friends of the theatre pointed out a further value of plays to the state, for without them "the idle-headed common would work more mischief," as Lodge affirms.²⁸ Thomas Nash maintains²⁹ that "it is very expedient that they [the people] have some light toys to busy their heads withal, cast before them as bones to gnaw upon, which may keep them from having leisure to intermeddle with higher matters"; and adds further³⁰: "Read Lipsius or any prophane or Christian politician and you shall find him of this opinion." Evidence of the general use of this argument, to which Nash refers, is not difficult to substantiate. Robert Laneham,³¹ regretting the abolition of the Hock Tuesday play, wishes it back because it "did so occupy the heads of a number that likely enough would have had worse meditation." Thomas Heywood,³² similarly, defends plays, since "doubtless there be many men of that temper, who, were they not carried away and weaned from their own corrupt and bad disposition, and by accidental means removed and altered from their dangerous and sullen intendments, would be found apt and prone to many notorious and traitorous practises." Further testimony to the general employment of this argument is found in its use, either in defense or in criticism, by S. Gosson,³³ Cervantes,³⁴ Guevara,³⁵ Tacitus³⁶ J. G. (Greene)³⁷

²⁸ In Thomas Lodge's *Attack upon Gosson*, p. 41.

²⁹ McKerrow edit. of *Nash*, 1. p. 211, l. 28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

³¹ Quoted in E. N. S. Thompson's *Controversy between the Puritans and the Stage*, p. 56.

³² T. Heywood's *Apology for Actors*, p. 31.

³³ In *School of Abuse*, Stephen Gosson, p. 31: "Meane time, if players be called to account for the abuses that growe by these assemblies, I would not

in *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors* (1615), Thomas Nash,³⁸ and Dion Cassius.³⁹

Shakespeare's acquaintance with this argument is no less likely than with the argument last named. Evidence of this is found in a passage in *Julius Caesar*.⁴⁰ Caesar is confessing to Anthony that were he capable of fear, Cassius would be the kind of man that he would have reason to suspect, for:—

He loves no plays
As thou dost, Anthony: he hears no music,
 Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
 As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit
 That would be moved to smile at any thing.
 Such men as he be never at heart's ease,
 While they behold a greater than themselves,
 And therefore are they very dangerous.

have them to answer, as Pilades did for the theaters of Rome when they were complayned on, and Augustus waxed angrye: 'This resorte, O Cesar, is good for thee, for there were kept thousand of idle heads occupied which else per-adventure would brue some mischief.'"

³⁴ *Don Quixote*, Tudor Trans. p. 246, (IV. 21): "It will be no sufficient excuse for this errour [abuse of plays], to say, that the principall end of well governed commonwealths in the permitting of comedies, is only to entertain the communaltie with some honest pastime, and thereby divert the exorbitant and vicious humours which idlenesses wont to ingender."

³⁵ In North's translation of *Diall of Princes*, chap. 43: "But this [allowance of plays] was not through abundance of vanity, but to take from the Plebians occasion of idleness and to keep them occupied in other particular playes."

³⁶ Quoted by J. Davies of Hereford, 1. p. 82, Grosart edit.: "There is good use of plaies and pastimes in a Commonwealth for thereby those that are most uncivill, prone to move war and dissention, are by these recreations accustomed to love peace and ease. Tac. 14. An. Ca. 6."

³⁷ "But admit that Cicero's opinion of Playes, viz., That many heads were busied with them which other wise would bee inquisitive after his greatness, etc."

³⁸ Vol. 1. line 23, p. 214, McKerrow edit.: Faith, when Dice, lust, and Drunkenness, and all have dealt upon him if there be never a Playe for him to go to for his pennie, he sits melancholie in his Chamber, devising upon felonie or treason, and how he may best exalt himselfe by mischief.

³⁹ Foster's edit. Vol. IV, p. 124: He (Augustus) brought back from exile one Pylades, a dancer, driven out on account of civil quarrels . . . Hence Pylades is said to have rejoined very cleverly when the emperor rebuked him for having quarreled with Bathyllus, an artist in the same line and a relative of Maecenas: 'It is to your advantage, Ceasar, that the populace should exhaust its energy over us.'

⁴⁰ I. ii, 200.

The significance for our purpose of this passage lies in the fact that it draws a contrast between a subject plotting treason, who "loves no plays"; and another subject innocent of conspiracy, who loves plays. For this antithesis between the lover of plays and the conspirator, Shakespeare is not indebted to Plutarch; but is relying probably upon the classical tradition that considers plays to be a potent instrument in diverting evil-minded men from their "traitorous practices."

Shakespeare's recognition in this passage of the argument in favor of plays is the more probable, since it was contended, not only in Roman but in his own time, that criminals from witnessing the reproofs administered by plays to vice, were often diverted from their villainy. A valuable passage in Heywood's *Apology for Actors*⁴¹ in this connection even attributes Julius Caesar's support of the *histriones* of Rome to his belief that they diverted the minds of criminals from treasonous conspiracies. "Julius Caesar, the famous conquerour, discoursing with Marcus Cicero, the as famous orator, amongst many other matters debated, it pleased the emperour to ask his opinion of the histriones, the players of Rome, pretending some cavil against them as men whose imployment in the commonweale was unnecessary. To whom Cicero answered this: Content thee, Caesar, there bee many heads busied and bewitched with these pastimes now in Rome, which otherwise would be inquisitive after thee and thy greatnesse. Which answer, how sufficiently the emperour approved, may be conjectured by the many guifts bestowed and privileges and charters after granted to men of that quality." At this point Heywood adds significantly, "Such was likewise the opinion of a great statesman of this land, about the time that certaine bookes were called in question."⁴²

The friends of the players, who made use of this argument in their printed defenses in resisting the aggressions of the enemies of plays, were active, also, in bringing the same argument based upon state policy to the attention of the highest state authorities. In a letter written Nov. 3, 1594, by the Lord Mayor of London to Lord

⁴¹ P. 31, *Apology for Actors*.

⁴² Thomas Nash (Vol. 1, p. 214) has in mind the Pylades incident (see note 39) when he tells of "a player's wittie answer" upon "a great Fraie in Rome": "It is good for thee, O Caesar, that the peoples heades are troubled with brawles and quarrels about us and our light matters: for other otherwise they would looke into thee and thy matters."

Burghley, Lord High Treasurer, the Lord Mayor writes:⁴³ "I am not ignorant (my very good Lord) what is alleadged by soome for defence of these playes that the people must have soom kynd of recreation and that policie requireth to divert idle heads and other ill disposed frome other woorse practize by this kynd of exercise." The Lord Mayor goes on to show that while godly recreations were good, ungodly plays are not tolerable, for they draw men to imitate evil, and to plot uprisings and troubles. In 1595 and 1597 almost the same language is used in similar communicaions.⁴⁴ In communications to the Privy Council the puritan Lord Mayor and Aldermen argue explicitly that far from diverting evil minded men from their plottings, plays gave such men examples and opportunities for promoting just such seditious plots: "Amonge other inconveniences it is not the least yt they give opportunity to the refuse sort of evill disposed and ungodly people that are within and abowte this cytie to assemble themselves and to make their matches for all their lewd and ungodly practices; being as heartofore we have found by th' examination of divers apprentices and other servants who have confessed unto us that the said stage playes were the very places their randevous appoynted by them to meet with such other as wear to ioigne with them in their designes and mutinus attempts." It was in these words of the Mayor and the Aldermen, which insisted that it was at the very theatres of London that tumults and uprisings in the city were hatched, that this ancient argument in favor of plays met its most vigorous opposition.

II

Besides such direct and argumentative references, to the puritan argument of waste of time, as we have been considering, there were other, numerous and emphatic, protests introduced by the dramatists into their plays in the form of caricatures of "a kind of puritan" compounded of equal parts of hypocrisy and of misdirected zeal. These satirical portrayals of the enemy were as popular with their audiences, as they were obnoxious to their objects of attack. In the publisher's preface to Rainolds' *Overthrow of Stage-Plays* (1599), expression is given to the offence taken by the puritans at frequent attacks upon the stage: "Men have

⁴³ Malone Society, Coll. 1., 1., p. 75.

⁴⁴ P. 79, *ibid.*

not been afraid of late days, to bring upon the stage the very sober countenances, grave attires, modest and matronlike gestures and speeches of men and women to be laughed at as a scorn and reproach." Lucy Hutchinson, also, writing of the treatment which puritans suffered years later declared that "every stage, every table and every puppet play belched forth profane scoffs upon them, the drunkards made them their songs, and all fiddlers and mimics learned to abuse them, as finding it the most graceful way of fooling."

To these caricatured puritans as presented on the stage, the dramatists frequently gave as an effective tag a zeal for the well-bestowal of time. In some cases these references by the dramatists to the puritans' "pensive care for the well-bestowal of time" are fully and definitely stated: in other cases they are only glanced at or inferred. Examples from plays, in which characters have given to them this puritan anxiety to spend time profitably, will show how the dramatists retaliated by using the puritan's view-point for their own purposes of caricature.

The puritan wife, Florila, in Chapman's *An Humourous Day's Mirth*⁴⁵ finds herself on a hot day too warmly clad, so that she is obliged to change her costume. In magnifying her trivial mistake into a sin—another touch in the satirical picture—Florila accuses herself of wasting time "that might be better spent." "What have I done?" she exclaims. "Put on too many clothes? The day is hot, and I am hotter clad than might suffice health: my conscience tells me that I have offended, and I'll put them off. That will ask time that might be better spent. One sin will draw another quickly on. See how the devil tempts."

Mistress Purge in Middleton's *Family of Love*, and Malheureux in Marston's *Dutch Courtesan*, are easily recognized by their words and views to be pictures of puritans. But the sketch is rendered complete when we are shown their zeal for the worthy employment of time. Malheureux⁴⁶ advises his friend to avoid those excesses that will be sure to expose to danger "his health, his strength, his precious time, and with that time the hope of any worthy end"; while Mistress Purge⁴⁷ is equally emphatic in her counsel to the young men of her acquaintance to reform: "Fie, fie, 'tis pity young

⁴⁵ Edit. 1873: Vol. 1, p. 57. (1.1.).

⁴⁶ A. H. Bullen edit., (1887): Vol. 11, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Dyce edit., (1840) Vol. 11, p. 125.

gentlemen can bestow their time no better; this playing [on the stage] is not lawful, for I cannot find that either plays or players were allowed in the prime church of Ephesus by the elders." All of which good advice, as intended by the authors, loses its point unless we recognize that it is offered by the veriest hypocrites, who assume the garb of virtue to cover their own manifold and serious transgressions. Hypocrisy must be premised to understand the true value of the stage-puritan's exhortation to virtue. It is the lack of appreciation of this fundamental element in Malvolio's character, that has misled some critics into sympathy with Olivia's steward who, "sick of self-love," "tastes with a distempered appetite." Mihil, a pretender to holiness, for the advantage of the moment, in Brome's *Weeding of Covent Garden*,⁴⁸ meets his father with "invectives against drinking, wenching and other abomination of the times," by which is "wasted both money, and time which is more pretious than money." The later dramatists of the seventeenth century do not forget to add this touch to their pictures of puritans. A "lay elder" in Mrs. Alpha Behn's *Good Old Cause*⁴⁹ condemns the idle sins of the times and points out that time spent in anything else than the great work of the reformation is both a loss and an abomination.

There are other similar satirical allusions in the plays which are *not* put in the mouths of stage puritans, as are those just mentioned.⁵⁰ The satirical purpose of these references, however, is no less intentional. Reference to examples of this kind will show the variety of ways in which satire against the time-saving

⁴⁸ 1873 edit. Vol. 11, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁹ 1871 edit., vol. 1, p. 324.

⁵⁰ However not all of the allusions in the plays of this character are of a satirical character. In a few plays of serious purpose the allusions to "wasting time" are made without intention of ridicule. Such references point to a certain sympathy on the part of the writers with the stricter view of life by the puritans. *Eastward Hoe*, p. 24: Touchstone: We lose no time in our sensuality, but we make amends for it. O that we would do so in virtue, and religious negligences. *Honest Whore*, B., XII. 348: Bellafront (reformed): Good love, I would not have them sell thy substance and time (worth all) in those damned shops of hell. P. 281: Bellafront (to deceiver): You love to undo us, To put heaven from us, whilst our best hours waste. *Lusty Juventus*, p. 123: Good Counsel: Saint Paul unto the Ephesians giveth good exhortation, Saying walk circumspectly, redemyng of the tyme; That is, to spend it well and not to wickedness incline. *Virgin Martyr*, p. 23: Angelo: Where did you waste your time when the religious man was on his knees speaking the heavenly language?

enemies of the stage is pointed. A mocking bawd in *Northward Hoe*⁵¹ says to the man who has given up his watch to her: "O, foolish young man, how dost thou spend the time!" A "wild gallant" in *The Picture*⁵² exclaims that in the pursuit of his pleasure he loses no time; and in *Old Timon*⁵³ a convivial person urges his fellows to drink, "not idely spende the time." In *The Ordinary*⁵⁴ we read that "we do best spende the time, when no dull zealous chime but sprightly kisses strike the hour."⁵⁵

III

As the examples shown above prove, an over-zealous regard for the right use of time was an essential detail in the satirical portrayal of the puritan by the Elizabethan dramatist. In the employment of this detail of characterization Shakespeare is no exception. Nor does it seem likely, when he ridicules a character's anxiety to employ time worthily, that he is not following the general practice of his fellow dramatists in holding up to laughter the precisians of his day. In this connection it is to be expected that there is in Shakespeare's use of this detail of characterisation a variety of method and a degree of effectiveness that are unknown to his fellow dramatists of less insight and penetration into the springs of character.

Twelfth Night gives interesting opportunity of observing Shakespeare's satirical treatment of the precisian's regard for the right employment of time, including the "tyeing" of allowed recreations to the times proper for such recreations.⁵⁶ Malvolio and

⁵¹ P. 258.

⁵² P. 215.

⁵³ P. 424.

⁵⁴ P. 206, Dodsley (1744).

⁵⁵ A late example is found in Dryden's *Law against Lovers*, p. 306: "Lucio: No, he [Duke] began the right course about forty [at which time we are told he became a loose lover]; but, good man, he repented the lost time of his youth." A later example still is found in *Minor*, where a citizen says to his nephew that "time is too precious to spend in talking with him."

⁵⁶ Allowed recreations, the puritan writers remind us repeatedly may be indulged in only under certain conditions: Stubbes, xi: "With respect had to the *time*, place, and persons, it [dancing] is in no respect to be disallowed." Northbrooke, 45: "Youth: I am very glad that you graunt some kynde of pastime and playes although you tye it to *times*, matters and persons." Gosson, p. 13: "I set this down not to condemn the fits of versifying, dauncing or singing in wiman, so they bee used with meane and exercised in *due time*."

Olivia, devoted to the strict ordering of their lives and of the lives of those about them, have their thoughts constantly upon the value of time and the necessity of spending it in fitting manner. Olivia "takes great exceptions" to Sir Toby's "ill hours," threatens to punish Feste for spending his time away from the house in "dishonest" practices, and calls the time that she spends in hearing Feste's fooling "idleness."

Malvolio rehearses to himself the lecture that he will give to Toby for "wasting the treasure of his time in the company of a foolish knight," upbraids the midnight revellers for their disregard of the late hour, and includes all of the "lighter people" under the charge of "idle, shallow things." Typical stage-puritan as he is, he divides his care for the right employment of time between an avoidance of indulgence in all "dishonest recreations"; and a careful restriction and supervision of the amount, the place, and the company in which time is spent in "honest recreations." Contrary to Mr. Rolfe's assertion that Malvolio does not speak like a puritan when he reprimands the roisterers at midnight, Olivia's steward gives characteristic puritan expression to his reproof of the noisy singers for their lack of "respect of time, persons and place": "My masters, are you mad, or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty? But to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do you make an ale-house of my lady's house, that ye squeak out your cozier's catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice? Is there no respect of time, persons, nor place in you?" The incorrigible Sir Toby is quick to turn this "pensive care" of Malvolio's for the "right bestowal of time" into a jest: "We did keep time in our catches. Out of time, sir, ye lie." And follows this quip with his penetrative summary of the puritan position: "Dost think because thou are virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

Sir Toby in this play is constitutionally opposed to the strict view of the employment of time held by his puritan niece and her time-serving steward, Malvolio. The idea that he may not trifle away his time as he wishes, is to Toby "a false conclusion," which he hates as "an unfilled can"—for is not "care an enemy of life?" His thoughts dwell on the cakes and the ale that the virtuous would banish. For him, as for Sir Andrew, "life consists rather of eating and drinking." When Andrew in a moment of regret repents that he has misspent his time in fencing, dancing, and bear-baiting,

Sir Toby has only ridicule for his thoughts of improving his time as he had for the puritan practice of early to bed and early to rise which he summarily sets aside with his "not to be abed after mid-night is to be up betimes."⁵⁷ Shakespeare makes high comedy here and elsewhere out of the exaggerated preciseness of the extreme puritan in insisting upon the proper time of day, place, and company for allowed amusements.

The mirth that lies in a passage in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is based upon the insistence of a foolish precisian to tie a 'recreation' *not* allowed to place and persons. Slender has been robbed by Falstaff's men, in whose company he had imbibed too much. Unable to find redress, he forms the pious resolution, by which he determines to govern his future conduct: "I'll ne'er be drunk while I live again, but in honest, civil, godly company for this trick; if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves." Upon this worthy sentiment, Parson Evans, mindful only of the reiterated puritan comment that 'pitch defiles,' stamps his approval with, "So Got 'udge me, that is a virtuous mind." Intentional satire in these words of Slender's is the more likely since we find him shortly afterwards naively revealing his hypocritical attitude towards bear-baiting: "I love the sport well: but shall as soon quarrel at it as any man in England"—which is exactly the attitude that the dramatists ascribe to the enemies of games and pastimes in England.

In *Much Ado About Nothing* there is humorous reference to the puritan solicitude to do all "within measure" and "in due time," the two restrictions upon recreations that Northbrooke

⁵⁷ Northbrooke is especially severe against those that either sleep over-much or sleep at unusual hours: p. 40: They will go verie late to bedde at night, and sleep long in the morning. Surely he that so doth, his offence is nothing lesse than his that all daye doth sitte in fatte dishes. Also p. 40: In which sort we must take our sleepe onely for necessitie, and nothing for ydle pleasure, and that in due time, and not out of season that we may the better serve God and our neighbours. p. 39: "Be you ashamed, then, that spende the greater parte of your time in ydlenesse, and sleepe in your beddes untill you be readye to goe to your dynner, neglecting thereby all dutye of service both towards God and man." A puritan preacher-teacher, Aminadab in *How a Man may*, etc. (Dodsley ix. pp. 27 and 70) is made to say, " [The rod] shall teach him that *diluculo surgere est saluberrimum*"; and, "This early rising, this *diluculo* Is good both for your bodies and your minds." In *Royal King*, etc., p. 125: "Why you were abroad Before the sunne was up, and the most wise Doe say 'tis healthful still betimes to rise."

Gosson, and Stubbes emphasize.⁵⁸ Leonato has just instructed his daughter in the reply she is to make to the Prince, in case he proposes for her hand during the dance. At this point Beatrice, interposing with characteristic banter, rallies her cousin: "The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not woo'd *in good time*. If the Prince be too important, tell him there is *measure in every thing*, and so dance out the answer."

Touchstone joins Beatrice in glancing mirthfully at the puritan concern for the proper employment of time. He has been listening to a song sung by the pages in praise of the present enjoyment of life: "Truly, young gentlemen, though there was no great matter in the ditty, yet the note was very untuneable. *First Page*: You are deceived, sir; we kept time, we lost not our time. *Touchstone*: By my troth, yes: *I count it but time lost* to hear such a foolish song." Touchstone in his preaching vein here is not offered us seriously; but only to make fun of the sober-minded critics of the stage, who would banish all plays for the time they "waste."

Falstaff's first words in *The First Part of Henry the Fourth*, "Now, Hal, what time of day is it?"—together with his following conversation with the Prince—take on an added meaning in the light of the value attached by the puritans to time, and of the dramatists' satire of this concern of theirs for the proper employment of the same. Hal's reply to Falstaff's query introduces Falstaff as a notorious abuser of time: and in so doing gives us at the beginning of the play the key to his character: "What the devil hast thou to do with the time of day? Unless the hours were cups of sack, and minutes capon, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping-houses and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of day."

Falstaff, defending himself against Hal's charge of waste of time, denies that he orders his life by the sun, or by the time of the day, but by the moon: "Indeed, you come near me, now, Hal: for

⁵⁸ Northbrooke, p. 109: "All these things, if they be done *moderately and in due time*, are tollerable. Gosson, 13: I set this down not to condemn the gifts of versifying, dauncing or singing in wiman, so they bee used *with meane and exercised in due time*. Northbrooke, p. 41: Honest and lawfull games as are chesse and tennise allowed at *convenient times and that moderately*. Stubbes, p. 155: I will not much denie but *being used in a meane, in tyme and place convenient*, it is a certen solace to the minds of such as take pleasure in such vanities."

we that take purses, go by the moon and the seven stars, and not by Phoebus"; and therefore, "sweet wag, when thou art king, let not us, that are squires of the night's body, be called thieves of the day's beauty [that is, those that waste the daylight]." "Let men say we are men of good government, being governed as the sea is by our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal."

Because he and his fellows waste their days in excessive idleness and pleasure, and therefore can not be called "men of good government," Falstaff disclaims allegiance to Phoebus. He prefers that he and his men be called "minions of the moon," under whose countenance they steal. If they be governed, then, as the sea is by the moon; and have her countenance to steal, why then they are still, in spite of all their waste of day-time, "men of good government"—and if "men of good government," then Hal's charge against him, of waste of time in particular and of worthlessness in general, falls to the ground, and he stands before us as innocent "as any cristom child."

Falstaff finds a frequent spring of mirth in thus "wrenching the false way" one or another of the puritan scruples. He returns twice to laugh at the puritan regard for time. Once while chiding Hal, as his "father will chide him when next he sees him," he gravely acts the part of the puritan in tying pastime to place, time, and persons: "Harry, I not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou are accompanied, for though the camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet youth the more it is wasted the sooner it wears." In another place Falstaff blames Bardolph for not observing the proper time, not for an allowed diversion, but—and here is the true Falstaffian touch—for a crime that under no circumstances could be allowed: "I am glad that I am so acquit of this tinderbox; his thefts were too open; his filching was like a unskillful singer; he kept not time." Bardolph was, therefore, in Falstaff's ill opinion, not because he stole, but because, not observing the proper time to steal, he was unsuccessful in his filching.

It is, however, only the excessive and hypocritical zeal for the "well bestowal of time," that challenges the derision of Shakespeare. In a number of places in his plays time well spent is duly valued and rewarded. It is well to remember in this connection, that the excessive zeal of the extreme puritans, which repeatedly

evoked Shakespeare's satire, was directed at the destruction of the theatre. In holding up to laughter the possessors of this immoderate zeal, Shakespeare is opposing, not the sincere contenders for a higher standard of living, but the enemies of the arts of life who knew no measure in their hatred of play and pastime.

From this examination of Shakespeare's allusions to the puritans' "over pensive regard" for the employment of time, it seems likely that he did not occupy in the dispute between the stage and the precisians the position of entire disinterestedness that has been assigned by many to him. It seems rather that he took a definite stand with the other defenders of the stage; and that, in the thrusts and parries of such characters as Falstaff, Touchstone, and Malvolio, he held up to ridicule those "grave learned divines who held that no Christian man might lawfully spend any time in games and pastimes."

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